

Appl. No. 10/621,724  
Amdt. dated April 29, 2005  
Reply to Office Action of December 2, 2004

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-3 (cancelled).

Claim 4 (currently amended): A lower back stretching apparatus  
[as recited in claim 3,] comprising:

a padded, waist-high bench comprising:

a horizontal forward portion adapted to support a  
user's prone upper torso, wherein the forward  
portion is comprised of:

a generally flat, rectangular, horizontal,  
padded element having an upper surface,  
an opposite lower surface, a front end, a  
rear end, and two opposite sides  
interconnecting the front end with the  
rear end, said front end and rear end  
defining a front portion longitudinal  
axis;

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four vertical support legs attached to the padded element lower surface, two of which vertical legs are front legs attached near to the element front end, one each near to each opposite side, and two of which vertical legs are rear legs attached near to the element rear end, one each near to each opposite side.

a pivotable rearward portion adapted to support a user's legs, wherein the rearward portion is comprised of:

a generally flat, rectangular, horizontal, padded element having an upper surface, an opposite lower surface, a front end, a rear end, and two opposite sides interconnecting the front end with the rear end, said front end and rear end defining a rearward portion longitudinal axis;

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two leg holders mounted on the rearward  
portion element upper surface near to the  
rearward portion rear end, said holders  
adapted to removably grip a pair of user  
legs during a stretching procedure;

an elongated, hollow support bar attached  
longitudinally to the rearward portion  
lower surface, said support bar having a  
longitudinal axis parallel to the  
longitudinal axis of the rearward  
portion, said support bar having a row of  
apertures along a bar side.

a crank mechanism interconnecting the forward  
portion and the rearward portion, said crank  
mechanism adapted to pivot the rearward  
portion from a zero degree horizontal position  
through a forty-five degree downward and  
rearward tilted position, wherein the crank  
mechanism is comprised of:

a support cross-bar attached to the two rear  
support legs of the forward portion;

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an elongated crank lever pivotally attached to  
the support cross-bar, said crank lever  
comprising:

a forward portion in front of the support  
cross-bar, said crank lever forward  
portion terminating in a Y-shaped  
element having two element ends,  
each said element end terminating in  
a hand grip positioned to the  
forward portion padded element  
sides;

a rearward portion to the rear of the  
support cross-bar, said crank lever  
rearward portion terminating in a U-  
shaped element having apertures  
formed along its sides, said U-  
shaped element adapted to fit about  
the rearward portion support bar,  
wherein the U-shaped apertures are  
aligned with the support bar  
apertures;

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a center section rotatably attached to  
the support cross-bar;  
an elongated removable pin adapted  
for joining the U-shaped element and  
the support bar together, said  
elongated pin adapted for removable  
attachment through the U-shaped  
element apertures and support bar  
apertures;

a damper piston interconnecting the  
forward portion rear end with the  
crank mechanism rearward portion.

Claim 5 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 4,  
wherein:

said vertical support legs are vertically adjustable.

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Claim 6 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 5,  
wherein:

said leg holders are adjustable along an axis  
perpendicular to a rearward portion padded element  
upper surface plane;

wherein a spring loaded button protruding through a  
select hole formed in a vertical telescoping  
support bar enables the leg holders to be adjusted  
closer or farther from the padded element upper  
surface.

Claim 7 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 6,  
further comprising:

a spring-loaded, pivotable vertical locking bar attached  
to the forward portion padded element lower surface  
and adapted for engagement with the crank mechanism  
crank lever forward portion, said locking bar is  
adapted to hold the crank lever in position wherein  
the rearward portion is in a full horizontal  
position;

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a holder mounted on the crank lever adapted for  
removably seating the locking bar in place;

a second holder attached to the forward portion padded  
element lower surface adapted for engaging the  
spring-loaded locking bar.

Claim 8 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 7,  
further comprising:

a hook element rotatably attached to each rear support  
leg;

a laterally protruding bar attached to each side of the  
crank mechanism forward portion near to the cross  
bar, each laterally protruding bar terminating in a  
half-ring element;

wherein each hook element is adapted to engage a half-  
ring element.

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Claim 9 (original): A stretching apparatus as recited in claim 8,  
further comprising:

a plurality of bottom prongs on the locking bar adapted  
to engage said crank lever holder and said second  
holder.